

CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION

July 22, 2010 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The Great Commission is a name for the work of world evangelism that Christ preached after He rose from the dead. It is called Great because it is repeated five times in the New Testament (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Repetition in the Bible has two very important purposes. First, *repetition is for emphasis*. By repeating this command so many times, God is saying it is important. Second, *repetition is for instruction*. Each mention of the Great Commission adds more instruction. We will examine four of the passages:

MATTHEW 28:18-20

1. We see the authority for the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18). Jesus has all authority, and when we preach the gospel we do so in His authority. Thus, we have the authority to go to *any* nation and to speak to *any* person in His name. Many people have the idea that “religion” is a private matter, but Jesus has made it our business to proclaim the gospel. The Bible says that every born again person is an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). We go in His name and authority.

2. We also see the work that is involved in doing the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

First, we are to preach the gospel. The teaching that is mentioned here refers to preaching the gospel, as we will see in Mark 16. Every church should send out gospel-preaching missionaries and should also support missionaries.

Second, we are to baptize those who believe. Baptism is not an option but a command. It is the first step of obedience for those who trust Christ as Saviour.

Third, we are to make disciples of those who believe. The work is not finished when someone is saved and baptized. In fact, that is only the beginning. We are to teach them to observe ALL things that Christ has commanded. We find these commandments in the New Testament Scriptures. This grounds believers in the faith and protects them from false teaching. This passage refutes the popular error that says that only some doctrines are “essential” while the rest are “non-essential” and should not be emphasized lest they cause unnecessary division. Jesus said we are to teach God’s people to observe and respect every part of His Word!

This work requires a church. In the book of Acts we see that it is the churches that fulfill the Great Commission. Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church at Antioch and they, in turn,

started many churches across Europe (Acts 13-14). To fulfill the Great Commission, every church must be a serious Bible training institution. The Great Commission is a BIG work.

3. We also see the promise associated with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20). We do the work, but the power is Christ's. He is with us. This is a special promise for a missionary-minded Christian and a missionary church.

MARK 16:15-16

1. The gospel is to be preached to every person, not only to every nation. This is a big job and it is the main task of every church. It means that every believer is needed to get the job done.

This tells us that God loves every soul and wants to save every soul, which is in contrast to the Calvinistic doctrine of "sovereign election."

This also reminds us that there is no other way of salvation except through faith in Christ. If there were another way of salvation, God would not require us to preach the gospel to every person at such a high cost.

2. Baptism is for believers, not for infants. The requirement for baptism is faith, which means that infants are not proper candidates. Infant baptism was a heresy that was devised after the completion of the New Testament and the death of the apostles.

3. Baptism follows salvation as the testimony and evidence thereof. It is not lack of baptism that condemns the soul to hell, but lack of faith. It is "he that believeth not" that is condemned. Paul taught that it is the gospel that saves (Romans 1:16), but baptism is not the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17; 15:1-4).

LUKE 24:44-48

1. It was necessary for Jesus to suffer, because there is no other way for sinners to be saved (Luke 24:46). Christianity is not what I do for God but what God has done for me in Christ.

2. Repentance is part of the Great Commission (Luke 24:47). There is no remission of sins without repentance, which means to turn from false gods and to surrender to God's authority.

3. Each believer is responsible to participate in this work (Luke 24:48).

ACTS 1:8

1. This work is the church's chief business. This is what we see in the book of Acts. The first churches didn't adopt grand schemes to try to solve the socio-political problems of the Roman Empire. They preached the gospel and disciplined believers and established new churches.

2. We can do nothing without the Holy Spirit. We must walk in fellowship with Him and seek His power. This is what prayer is about. It is acknowledging our need of Him and seeking His help. The Holy Spirit came upon the early believers at Pentecost, and since then He seals each believer as soon as he trusts Christ (Eph. 1:12-14).

3. Our job is to lift up Jesus Christ. We are to be witnesses of Him. When we talk to people about the things of God, we should talk about Christ rather than the church or “Christianity.”

4. The Great Commission starts at home and extends throughout the world at the same time. This can be accomplished through the churches, as they seek to win their own communities to Christ and as they support missionaries in other places.

How can the individual believer fulfill the Great Commission?

1. *By surrender.* This is where the Great Commission begins: “Here am I, Lord, send me. What do you want me to do, Lord?” See Isaiah 6:8; Romans 12:1.

2. *By fellowship with Christ.* If we don’t walk with the Lord, we will have no wisdom and power and guidance. We will have no interest in doing His will.

3. *By learning.* We can’t be well used by God if we are ignorant of His Word. We must learn the Bible so that we can answer people’s questions. We must learn how to witness effectively, how to pray, etc.

4. *By faithfulness.* The heart of missions is churches and strong churches require dedicated, faithful members.

5. *By prayer.* This is the source of wisdom and power for the Great Commission. God’s people must be prayer warriors, praying for their own church, for other churches, for missionaries, for unsaved relatives, for unsaved friends, for those who are hearing the gospel through tracts and personal witness. Prayer changes things. How many things are being changed by my prayers?

6. *By giving.* The Lord’s Great Commission is a large, expensive work. Am I giving to Christ’s work in such a manner that proves my love for Him and that is furthering the gospel to the ends of the earth?

7. *By going.* Every born again child of God is an ambassador for Christ and should be busy talking to people about the Lord, giving out tracts, and being faithful to church visitation programs.

8. *By child training* (Prov. 22:6). Children are arrows in the quivers of wise Christian parents to be trained for the service of Christ (Psa. 127:4-5). Christian parents need to raise their children so

that they know that the most important thing in this life is Christ and His business. What example do the children see in the parents? Parents can't call their children to be missionaries, because that is a special call of God, but they can train them to be missionary-minded.

9. *By separation from the world.* Worldliness destroys spiritual vision and power (1 Peter 2:11).

It is a great privilege to bear the name of the eternal Son of God in this present wicked world. Time is short and we must use the opportunity that God has given us while the opportunity remains.

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